

Demographic Snapshots

a monthly look
at Seattle's
population &
housing changes
from the City
Demographer

Seattle's Overall Poverty Rate Declined in the 1990s

More than 64,000 people living in Seattle in 2000 had incomes below poverty as defined by the federal government, up 3.9 percent from 1990. However, since the city's total population grew 9.1 percent during this period, the poverty rate* itself declined from 12.4 to 11.8.

The only source for a large amount of detail about Seattle's poor is the U.S. Census of Popula-

tion and Housing, which is conducted every 10 years and commonly known as "The Census." The 2000 census found age and sex are key factors in determining who is likely to live in poverty, as detailed below. Race and ethnicity are also key, and will be explored in future articles.

Poverty Rate Varies by Sex and Age

The differences between two profiles in **Graphs 1 and 2** reveal age as an important factor in poverty statistics. While people between 25 and 34 formed the largest 10-year age group in Seattle in 2000, the largest group in poverty were actually between 15 and 24 (see **Graph 2**). If people at all ages were equally likely to be poor the two age profiles would have equal percentages in matching age groups.

Poverty rates also vary by sex. Overall, one in eight females lived below poverty in 1999 compared to one in nine males. But at some ages, males were more likely to be poor than females.

While most age groups are about equally divided between males and females (see **Graph 1**), differences between the sexes are more perceptible among those in poverty (see **Graph 2**). Poverty rates were higher among girls and young women than among boys and young men. They were also higher among women than men ages 65 and over.

The disparity in poverty rates for people in three broad age groups and how they changed between the 1990 and 2000 censuses is displayed in **Graph 3**. Poverty rates were highest for young adults between 18 and 24. The 1999 income of one in four young adults was below poverty compared to one in 8.5 for all ages combined. Children were also more likely to be poor: one out of seven children under 18 lived in poverty.

In contrast, for adults age 25 and over the odds of living in poverty were lower than for the population overall. Only one in 11 adults over 25 were poor.

See **poverty rate** on page 2

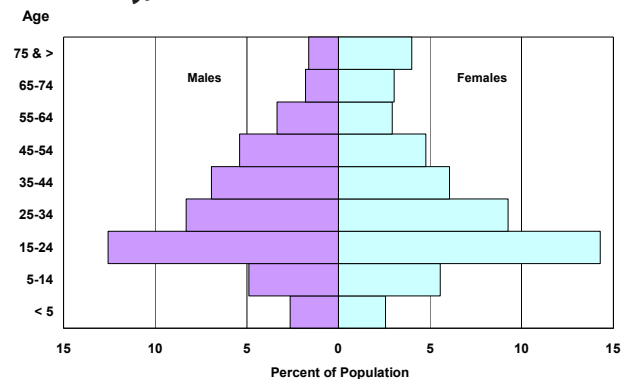
* The poverty rate is a simple percentage: the number of people in poverty divided by the total number of people.

Graph 1. Age and Sex Profile of Population,



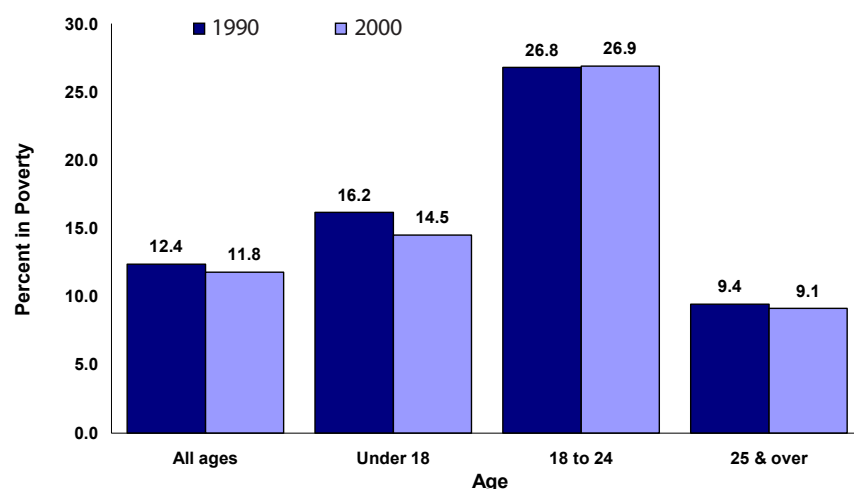
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent data.

Graph 2. Age and Sex Profile of Population in Poverty, Seattle 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent data.

Graph 3. Poverty Rates Remained Highest for Young Adults and Kids, Seattle 1990* & 2000*



* Poverty rates are based on the annual income during the year prior to the census, 1989 and 1999.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 censuses Summary File 3 (STF 3 & SF 3) Sample data.

In 1999 the largest age group living in poverty in Seattle was between 15 and 24. Overall, females were more likely to live in poverty than males.

poverty rate, cont. from page 1

For young adults the poverty rate held steady over the decade at around 27 percent. But for children the rate fell from 16.2 percent to 14.5 percent, and for adults 25 and over the rate declined from 9.4 to 9.1.

Poverty Line Depends on Household Type

The official poverty line in the U.S. is not a single number. Rather, it refers to a set of income thresholds that vary for different types of households. The level of income that defines poverty for a person depends on the number of people in the

household and their ages.

Table 1 shows a sample of the income levels used in the 2000 census to determine who lived in poverty. Each of 42 types of households has a different income threshold. For example, a one-person household with 1999 income under \$8,667 lived below the poverty line, as did a three-person household with one child who lived on less than \$13,410.

For more information, visit the City of Seattle's Population and Demographics website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/demographics or contact:

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Table 1. Extract of Federal Poverty Thresholds, 1999

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN* IN HOUSEHOLD				
	None	One	Two	...	Eight or More
One person	\$8,667				
Two people	11,156 **	\$11,483 **			
Three people	13,032	13,410	\$13,423		
Four people	17,184	17,465	16,895	...	
...	
Nine or more	36,897	37,076	36,583	...	\$32,208

* Children refers to all persons under age 18.

** Income thresholds shown for two-person households refer to those with the head of household under age 65; thresholds are lower for households headed by people 65 or older.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Technical Documentation, Appendix B